



Wrinkle-free Polls a 'no-brainer' for Richard

Flystrike no longer an
issue at Brewarrina

There are certain challenges that come with operating a Merino breeding operation on 10,000 hectares of open saltbush plains around Brewarrina/Nyngan. After 12 years of considered breeding, Richard and Dixie Stendell, "Ben Avon", have completely changed the type of Merino they run, and the result has been a low-maintenance, wrinkle-free, highly fertile wool cutter.

"We've noticed a big change in our Merinos as a result of going this way," Richard says. "We've been breeding the wrinkle off them, getting a more open-faced sheep, and we've brought our micron down 2-3 micron in 12 years without losing any wool cut in that time. "It's just so encouraging to see our Merinos improving from year to year and to look back and think where we were 10 years ago and where we are now, it's incredible the difference in our sheep. "We use a lot less chemicals now because we don't have the wrinkle on the sheep, very little flystrike, the sheep are so easy to shear and the shearers love shearing them, and we can't get over the length of wool they now grow. Flystrike used to be one of our biggest problems and now it's barely a problem at all.

"We shear in May and our wool cut is around the 7kg mark for 20-micron wool in our 3000 breeding ewes, which I think is fine if they're having 110-115% lambs each year."

The Stendells were sold on Kerin Poll genetics after buying a flock of four-year-old ewes from Nigel in November, 2009. This was ahead of a wet summer contributing to a 30-inch rainfall year in an area with an average annual rainfall of just 16 inches.

"Not long after they landed here it started raining and we had a very wet summer. They went right through the wet summer with no

chemical and went right through to shearing in May with no chemical whatsoever, and did not have any flystrike in them. We thought our sheep were getting pretty good for resistance to flystrike but we got quite a bit of fly in ours because it was such a wet summer.

"We joined the ewes but didn't scan them because we knew they were good breeders, and we marked 141% of lambs from them. We were very impressed with that when our own were only going 110-115%. To go 141% unscanned, we thought was very good.

"I've had a fair bit to do with Merinos ever since I was a kid and I've had a lot to do with blowflies in sheep. Up until fairly recently I thought it was impossible to breed Merinos that didn't get flies whereas now I believe you can, and I've had it proven to me. You don't have to live with blowflies if you've got Merinos."

"To me that means a lot less work, less worry, less cost, and more profit for less work. There's nothing worse than bringing in a mob of sheep and seeing that 5% of them have got flies across the shoulders or tail. It just doesn't happen now and it makes life so much better to have Merinos."

The Stendells bought one of the two equal top-priced rams at last year's inaugural Kerin Poll on-property ram sale (rams bought at this sale pictured left), and has always bought the best genetics on offer. "The thing I like about the Kerin Poll rams is that they're not just bred for wool," Richard says. "They're bred for wool and carcass, which I think is a big thing nowadays. They've got great fertility, they're big and long with good muscle, and of course they have no wrinkle on them so they're easy-care.

"With the Poll rams we don't get any problems with flies, they don't get caught in fences, they're easy to shear, they don't seem to fight as much as horned rams and they seem to have very good temperaments. We just wouldn't go back to anything else now."



**I didn't think it was possible to
breed Merinos that didn't get flies
but I now believe you CAN!**